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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
OMB-01 TRSE-00 SSM-03 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00
INRE-00 /054 W
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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 5635
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 2504

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IS, PGOV
SUBJECT: CENTRAL COMMITTEE PICKS PERES

REF: TEL AVIV 2503

1. THE LABOR PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE (CC) TONIGHT OVER-WHELMINGLY VOTED TO REPLACE YITZHAK RABIN WITH SHIMON PERES AS THE PARTY'S CANDIDATE FOR PRIME MINISTER IN THE MAY 17 ELECTION. PERES' WAS THE ONLY NAME PLACE IN NOMINATION. THE TALLY OF THE OPEN VOTE INCLUDED ONLY EIGHT NAYS AND 18 ABSTENTIONS AMONG THE 815 MEMBERS OF THE CC. THE RESULT WAS A FOREGONE CONCLUSION FOLLOWING THE ANNOUNCEMENT LAST NIGHT OF AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN PERES AND YIGAL ALLON GIVING PERES THE TOP SPOT AND ALLON THE SECOND POSITION IN LABOR'S KNESSET LIST. IT IS UNDERSTOOD THAT ABBA EBAN, ELECTION RESULTS PERMITTING, WILL RETURN AS FOREIGN MINISTER (A MOVE MADE POSSIBLE BY THE DISAPPEARANCE OF RABIN WITH HIS INTENSE DISLIKE OF EBAN). ALTHOUGH ALLON WAS ASSURED THE DEFENSE PORTFOLIO, IF HE WANTED IT, PERES REPORTEDLY REFUSED TO PUT THE COMMITMENT IN
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WRITING, ARGUING THAT HE COULD NOT TIE HIS HANDS BEFORE AN ELECTION WHICH MAY REQUIRE HARD BARGAINING TO FORM THE NEXT COALITION.

2. ACCEPTING THE NOMINATION, PERES SAID HE IS NOT THE CANDIDATE OF ANY ONE FACTION BUT OF A UNITED PARTY AND THAT FOLLOWING VICTORY IN MAY HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE IN THE

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SEARCH FOR PEACE BASED ON TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE ON ALL FRONTS.
HE MADE NO MENTION OF MAPAM, WHOSE CC IS SCHEDULED TO DECIDE
TOMMOROW ON WHETHER IT WILL CONTINUE IN THE
ALIGNMENT. PERES, ALLON AND EBAN ADDRESSED THE MAPAM LEADERSHIP
TODAY TO PERSUADE THEM NOT TO LEAVE AND PERES WILL APPEAR
BEFORE MAPAM'S CC TOMORROW.

3. RABIN, WHO SAT FRONT ROW, CENTER, HEARD PARTY SECGEN

MEIR ZARMI SAY THAT HE HAD VIOLATED A CURRENCY LAW AND PASSED

SENTENCE ON HIMSELF. THE PARTY HAD, THEREFORE, TO SELECT A
NEW LEADER. RABIN WAS CHEERED WHEN HE ENTERED THE PACKED
MEETING HALL AND AGAIN AS HE LEFT. PLACARDS SAYING "WE ARE WITH
YOU, YITZHAK RABIN", AND "RABIN COME BACK, WE NEED YOU",
UNDERSCORED THE SYMPATHIES OF THE CROWD WAITING OUTSIDE.

4. COMMENT: THE EVENTS OF THE PAST THREE DAYS HAVE OCCURRED
AT A PACE WHICH HAS LEFT OBSERVERS LITTLE TIME TO ASSESS THEIR
FULL IMPLICATION. HOWEVER, SEVERAL QUESTIONS WILL REQUIRE
FURTHER EXPLORATION. FIRST, WHAT WILL BE THE IMPACT ON
RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES? PERES HAS HAD A GOOD
RELATIONSHIP WITH PROMINANT AMERICANS HE HAS CULTIVATED
DURING VISITS TO ISRAEL AND DURING HIS OWN VISITS TO THE
UNITED STATES. HE IS KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT THE AMERICAN SCENE.
AS ONE OBSERVER (MARCUS) REMARKED, WASHINGTON SHOULD WELCOME THE
CHANGE. THE TRIUMVIRATE OF PERES, ALLON AND EBAN CONTAINS TWO
DOVES AMONG THE THREE AND, IN ADDITION, SAYS MARCUS,
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PERES WILL BE STRONGLY INFLUENCED BY AND BEHOLDEN TO OTHER
DOVISH LEADERS CLOSE TO HIM, SUCH AS NAVON AND SARID.
PERHAPS COUNTER BALANCING THAT TREND WOULD BE THE EXPECTED
HAWKISH INFLUENCE ON PERES BY HIS FORMER MENTOR, MOSHE DAYAN.

5. SECOND, WHAT WILL BE THE EFFECT ON LABOR'S ELECTORAL FOR-
TUNES ON MAY 17? THE FIRST IMPRESSION IS THAT LITTLE DAMAGE
WILL BE DONE OR, SAID ANOTHER WAY, THE DAMAGE WILL NOT BE AS
GREAT AS HAD BEEN EXPECTED. ONE FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL
REMARKED THAT ANY THINKING ISRAELI VOTER CANNOT HELP
BUT BE INFLUENCED BY THE RESILIANCE OF THE PARTY IN ACCEPTING
THE RESIGNATION OF ITS CHOSEN LEADER AND CHOOSING A NEW TEAM
WITHIN 48 HOURS. ALSO THOSE VOTERS DEMANDING A FRESH WIND
IN ISRAELI POLITICS MUST BE INFLUENCED BY THE PARTY LEADER'S
ACCEPTANCE OF THE RULE OF LAW.

6. THIRD, IS THERE A POLITICAL FUTURE FOR RABIN? CONTRARY TO HOW
THAT QUESTION WOULD HAVE BEEN ANSWERED FRIDAY MORNING, IT
NOW APPEARS HE IS NOT FINISHED. HE WILL APPARENTLY BE GIVEN

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A AFE PLACE ON THE LABOR LIST, AND PERES HIMSELF REFERRED TO
HIM BY SAYING THAT BOTH WERE IN THE MIDDLE OF THEIR CAREERS
(RABIN AT 55, PERES IS 53).

7. FOURTH, WHAT WILL BE THE COMPOSITION OF THE GOVERNMENT
DURING THE PERIOD PRIOR TO THE ELECTION? IT APPEARS THE LABOR
LEADERSHIP HAS DEVOTED ITS ENTIRE ATTENTION TO RESOLVING THE
QUESTION OF LEADERSHIP AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH MAPAM AND
HAS NOT LOOKED AT THE QUESTION OF PORTFOLIOS FOR THE
CARETAKER GOVERNMENT. PERHAPS, AS ANOTHER OBSERVER (SCHWEITZER)
SAID,IT DOES NOT
REALLY MATTER; REGARDLESS OF TITLES, PERES WILL BE THE
POLICY MAKER FROM NOW ON.
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